



Patient Information Leaflet

Exposure of Canine Tooth

Cork University Dental School & Hospital



This leaflet has been designed to explain exposing canine (eye) teeth and it contains answers to many frequently asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer, or if you would like further information, please ask us.

What is the problem?

The canine (eye) teeth usually appear in the mouth between 9 and 13 years of age. Sometimes these teeth develop in the wrong position and cannot break through the gum (erupt). In the upper jaw they are often found in the roof of the mouth just behind the front teeth. If these buried teeth are left alone they may never erupt by themselves, or they may erupt very late. They may not cause any problems if they are left alone but there is a possibility that they may:

- push other teeth out of position
- cause damage to the roots of nearby teeth
- develop cysts

Your orthodontist has asked us to uncover the tooth so that they can move it into its proper position.

What does the treatment involve?

An exposure is a short surgical procedure. It usually takes 15-20 minutes. The buried tooth is covered by gum and in some cases by a thin layer of bone as well. This covering needs to be removed to encourage the tooth to erupt. When the tooth has been uncovered a small, flat pad of gauze is stitched in place over the tooth. This pad will be removed some days later. This is called an **open exposure**. Sometimes your orthodontist will ask your surgeon to attach a small gold chain to the tooth and to close the gum over it again. The chain is then attached to your braces. This is called a **closed exposure**.

What happens next?

Your orthodontist will have discussed the next stage of your treatment with you. The tooth may start to erupt by itself after the exposure but it may need some help from an orthodontic appliance (brace). If you have further questions about this please ask your orthodontist.

What are the risks?

There are very few risks with this procedure. However, if the buried tooth is **very close** to the roots of nearby teeth then uncovering it may cause damage to these roots. If roots are damaged then those teeth may require further treatment later on, such as a root canal treatment. This does not necessarily mean that you will lose any teeth.

Sometimes the treatment may fail and the exposed tooth may not move into your mouth.

What sort of appointment will I need?

There are usually three options – depending on how difficult the procedure will be. These appointment options are:

- 1. Local Anaesthetic** – an injection into your gum to make the area completely numb - just as you would have for a filling with your own dentist. This is suitable for many exposures.
- 2. Local Anaesthetic with Sedation** – an injection into your arm or a gas to breathe to help you feel more relaxed during treatment.
- 3. General Anaesthetic** – you are put to sleep completely in a hospital theatre. This is generally used for very young patients or when the tooth will be difficult to expose.

What can I expect afterwards?

You will have some soreness after the exposure but this is usually not severe. You will be able to eat, drink and talk as normal. You will get a prescription for painkillers and mouthwash to keep you comfortable afterwards. There is usually very little swelling or bruising.

What instructions will I be given afterwards?

It is important that you use your mouth as normally as possible after the surgery. The more normally you can use your mouth the faster it will feel comfortable again.

1. Take your first dose of painkiller as soon as you can - while you are still numb
2. Eat, drink and talk normally
3. For the first 24 hours drink lots of water
4. Brush your teeth normally apart from the surgical area
5. Use the recommended mouthwash regularly to keep the surgical area clean
6. Continue to take your painkillers regularly - don't wait for it to get sore

It is important that you attend your orthodontist or dentist to have the pack in your mouth removed. This is usually done about 10 days after your surgery but can be earlier or later as your orthodontist advises.

Make sure that your orthodontist knows your tooth has been exposed.

Make sure that you have an appointment with your orthodontist for follow-up.

This leaflet is available online at <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool/patients>